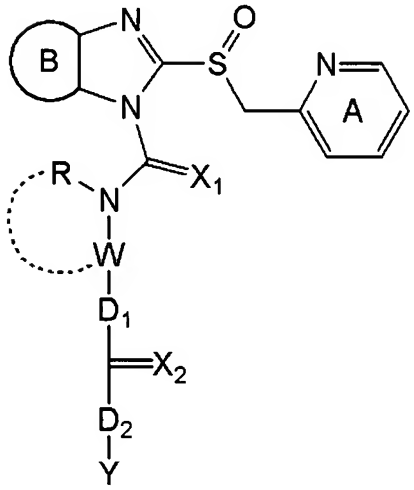
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An imidazole compound represented by the formula (I):



(I)

wherein

ring A is a pyridine ring optionally having substituents selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group, and

(2) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally substituted by substituent(s) selected from halogen atom(s) and C_{1-6} alkoxy group,

ring B is a benzene ring optionally having substituents selected from

C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally substituted by halogen atom(s) ~~or a monocyclic aromatic heterocycle optionally having substituents~~,

X_1 and X_2

are each an oxygen atom or a sulfur atom,

W is a ~~divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~ C_{1-6} alkylene group optionally having substituents selected from C_{1-6} alkyl-carbonyloxy and ethoxycarbonyloxy or a divalent group represented by the formula:

$$--W_1--Z--W_2--$$

wherein W_1 and W_2 are each a ~~divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~C_{1-6} alkylene group or a bond, Z is ~~a divalent hydrocarbon ring group optionally having substituents,~~C_{6-14} arene, ~~a divalent heterocyclic group optionally having substituents,~~ an oxygen atom, SO_n wherein n is 0, 1 or 2, or >N-E wherein E is a hydrogen atom, ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents, a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents,~~ a lower alkanoyl group, a lower alkoxycarbonyl group, an aralkyloxycarbonyl group, a thiocarbamoyl group, a lower alkylsulfinyl group, a lower alkylsulfonyl group, a sulfamoyl group, a mono-lower alkylsulfamoyl group, a di-lower alkylsulfamoyl group, an arylsulfamoyl group, an arylsulfinyl group, an arylsulfonyl group, an arylcarbonyl group or a carbamoyl group ~~optionally having substituents~~, and when Z is an oxygen atom, SO_n or >N-E, W_1 and W_2 are each C_{1-6} alkylene group ~~a divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~,

R is ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents or a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents~~ a group selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally substituted by C_{1-6} alkyl-carbonyloxy,

(2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group, and

(3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally substituted by a group represented by $-CO-NR^2R^3$ (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group),

R and W

may be bonded to each other,

D_1 is an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom or $>NR_1$,

~~D_1 and D_2~~

~~are each~~ is a bond, an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom or $>NR_1$ wherein each R_1 is independently ~~a hydrogen atom or a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents~~ C_{1-6} alkyl group, ~~except for when D_1 and D_2 are each a bond~~, and

Y is ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents or a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents~~a group selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from C_{1-6} alkoxy group, ethoxycarbonyloxy group, C_{6-14} aryl group and a group represented by $-NR^2R^3$ (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group),

(2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group,

(3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from (i) halogen atom and (ii) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally having halogen atom(s), and

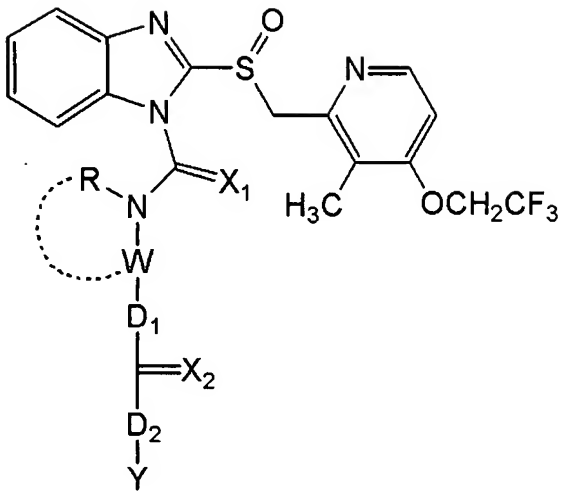
(4) tetrahydropyran,

or a salt thereof.

2. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 1, wherein Z is C_{6-14} arene~~a divalent hydrocarbon ring group optionally having substituents or a divalent heterocyclic group optionally having substituents~~.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) The compound of claim 1, which is represented by the formula (II) :



(II)

wherein each symbol in the formula is as defined in claim 1.

5. (Previously Presented) The compound of claim 1, wherein X_1 and X_2 are each an oxygen atom.

6. (Currently Amended) The compound of claim 1, wherein D_1 is an oxygen atom and D_2 is ~~are each~~ a bond or an oxygen atom~~, except for when D_1 and D_2 are each a bond~~.

7. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 1, wherein W is a divalent chain ~~hydrocarbon group~~ C_{1-6} alkylene group optionally having substituents selected from C_{1-6} alkyl-carbonyloxy and ethoxycarbonyloxy.

8. (Original) The compound of claim 1, wherein W is an ethylene group.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 1, wherein Y is a ~~C_{1-6} hydrocarbon~~ group ~~optionally having substituents or~~selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from C_{1-6} alkoxy group,

ethoxycarbonyloxy group, C_{6-14} aryl group and a group represented by $-NR^2R^3$ (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group),

(2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group, and

(3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from (i) halogen atom and (ii) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally having halogen atom(s) ~~a saturated heterocyclic group optionally having substituents, which contains, as ring-constituting atom, 1 to 4 heteroatom(s) selected from oxygen atom, nitrogen atom and sulfur atom~~.

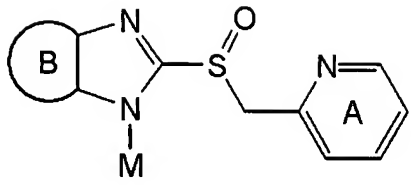
11. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 1, wherein X_1 and X_2 are each an oxygen atom, D_1 is an oxygen atom and D_2 is ~~are each~~ a bond or an oxygen atom ~~except for when D_1 and D_2 are both a bond~~, W is an ethylene group, R is a C_{1-6} alkyl group, and Y is a ~~C_{1-6} hydrocarbon~~ group selected from(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from C_{1-6} alkoxy group, ethoxycarbonyloxy group, C_{6-14} aryl group and a group represented by $-NR^2R^3$ (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group), (2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group, and (3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from (i) halogen atom and (ii) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally having halogen atom(s) ~~optionally having substituents or a saturated oxygen-containing heterocyclic group optionally having substituents, which may further contain, as ring-constituting atom, 1 to 3 heteroatom(s) selected from oxygen atom, nitrogen atom and sulfur atom~~.

12. (Original) The compound of claim 1, which is a compound selected from
2-[methyl[[(R)-2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl acetate,
ethyl 2-[methyl[[(R)-2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl carbonate,
2-[methyl[[(R)-2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl tetrahydropyran-4-yl carbonate,
2-[methyl[[2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-

1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl tetrahydropyran-4-yl carbonate,
ethyl 2-[methyl[[2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl carbonate,
ethyl 2-[[[5-methoxy-2-[[(4-methoxy-3,5-dimethyl-2-pyridyl)methyl]sulfinyl]-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-3-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl carbonate,
2-[[[5-methoxy-2-[[(4-methoxy-3,5-dimethyl-2-pyridyl)methyl]sulfinyl]-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-3-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl acetate,
2-[methyl[[2-[[[3-methyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroethoxy)-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl]amino]ethyl acetate,
ethyl 2-[[[5-methoxy-2-[[(4-methoxy-3,5-dimethyl-2-pyridyl)methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl carbonate,
ethyl 2-[[[(S)-5-methoxy-2-[[(4-methoxy-3,5-dimethyl-2-pyridyl)methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl carbonate,
ethyl 2-[[[2-[[[4-(3-methoxypropoxy)-3-methyl-2-pyridyl]methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl carbonate, and
2-[[[5-(difluoromethoxy)-2-[[(3,4-dimethoxy-2-pyridyl)methyl]sulfinyl]-1H-benzimidazol-1-yl]carbonyl](methyl)amino]ethyl ethyl carbonate,
or a salt thereof.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently amended) A production method of a compound of claim 1, which comprises
(1) condensing a compound represented by the formula (III):



(III)

wherein

ring A is a pyridine ring optionally having substituents selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group, and

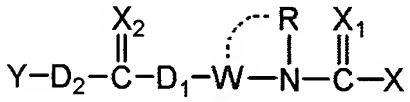
(2) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally substituted by substituent(s) selected from halogen atom(s) and C_{1-6} alkoxy group,

ring B is a benzene ring optionally having substituents selected from

C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally having halogen atom(s) ~~or a monocyclic aromatic heterocycle optionally having substituents~~, and

M is a hydrogen atom, a metal cation or a quaternary ammonium ion,

or a salt thereof, with a compound represented by the formula (IV):



(IV)

wherein

X is a leaving group,

X_1 and X_2

are each an oxygen atom or a sulfur atom,

W is ~~a divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~ C_{1-6} alkylene group optionally having substituents selected from C_{1-6} alkyl-carbonyloxy and ethoxycarbonyloxy, or a divalent group of the formula:

$$—W_1—Z—W_2—$$

wherein W_1 and W_2 are each a ~~divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~C_{1-6} alkylene group or a bond, Z is ~~a divalent hydrocarbon ring group optionally having substituents~~ C_{6-14} arene, ~~a divalent heterocyclic group optionally having substituents,~~ an oxygen atom, SO_n wherein n is 0, 1 or 2, or >N-E wherein E is a hydrogen atom, ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents, a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents,~~ a lower alkanoyl group, a lower alkoxycarbonyl group, an aralkyloxycarbonyl group, a thiocarbamoyl group, a lower alkylsulfinyl group, a lower alkylsulfonyl group, a sulfamoyl group, a mono-lower alkylsulfamoyl group, a di-lower alkylsulfamoyl group, an arylsulfamoyl group, an arylsulfinyl group, an arylsulfonyl group, an arylcarbonyl group or a carbamoyl group ~~optionally having substituents~~, and when Z is an oxygen atom, SO_n or >N-E, W_1 and W_2 are each C_{1-6} alkylene group ~~a divalent chain hydrocarbon group~~,

R is ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents or a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents~~ a group selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally substituted by C_{1-6} alkyl-carbonyloxy,

(2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group, and

(3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally substituted by a group represented by -CO–NR^2R^3 (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group),

R and W may be bonded to each other,

D_1 is an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom, or $>NR_1$,

~~and~~ D_2 is ~~are each~~ a bond, an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom, or $>NR_1$ wherein each R_1 is independently ~~a hydrogen atom or a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents~~ C_{1-6} alkyl

group, ~~except for when D_1 and D_2 are each a bond,~~ and

Y is ~~a hydrocarbon group optionally having substituents or a heterocyclic group optionally having substituents~~a group selected from

(1) C_{1-6} alkyl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from C_{1-6} alkoxy group, ethoxycarbonyloxy group, C_{6-14} aryl group and a group represented by $-NR^2R^3$ (wherein R^2 and R^3 are each C_{1-6} alkyl group),

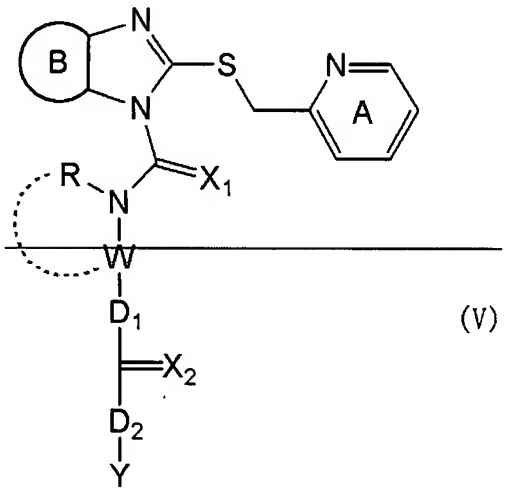
(2) C_{3-10} cycloalkyl group,

(3) C_{6-14} aryl group optionally having substituent(s) selected from (i) halogen atom and (ii) C_{1-6} alkoxy group optionally having halogen atom(s), and

(4) tetrahydropyran, or

a salt thereof~~, or~~

~~(2) subjecting a compound represented by the formula (V):~~



(V)

~~wherein each symbol in the formula is as defined above, or a salt thereof, to an oxidization reaction~~.

15. (Previously Presented) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of claim 1 together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claims 16-19 (Cancelled)

20. (Currently amended) A method for the ~~prophylaxis or~~ treatment of peptic ulcer~~, gastritis, peptic esophagitis, symptomatic gastroesophageal reflux disease (symptomatic GERD) free of esophagitis, NUD, gastric cancer, gastric MALT lymphoma, Zollinger-Ellison syndrome, acid indigestion or upper gastrointestinal hemorrhage~~ in an animal, which comprises administering an effective amount of a compound of claim 1 to the animal.

Claims 21-24 (Cancelled)